

Curiosity by pookiestheone

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Summary:

In case anyone isn't aware, the song is "You Always Hurt the One You Love" and the first few lines are:

You always hurt the one you love
The one you shouldn't hurt at all

It goes back to the 40's but there have been many well-known versions over the years. My head canon is Billy's mother was a teen in the 60's when there was a spate of recordings from people like Fats Domino, Pat Boone, and Brenda Lee.

Curiosity

As far as Steve was concerned it had been one bitch of a day. The highlight was the flat tire he got on the way to school that made him late. Then when he went to get his lunch he realised he had left it sitting on the table at home. To make matters worse he also didn't have any money and no one seemed to have any to lend him so he ended up scrounging carrots, of all things, from Nancy and a half sandwich from a guy on the basketball team. All of that put him in a miserable mood which lead him to getting detention - again.

After spending a half hour in detention twiddling his thumbs he was finally in the parking lot heading to his car. His parents had gone to his aunt's for a few days so that meant he had to make his own dinner. Now he knew he was just feeling sorry for himself because his mother always left food ready to heat up.

"Hey, pretty boy." Billy was hanging out his car window, arms draped over the side slapping his hands against the side in time to the music from his radio.

Oh for Christ's sake. Just going to ignore him.

"Harrington! You deaf or is it something I've done?" The words came out slurred.

He turned sharply and walked over to the car.

"What do you want, Hargrove." As he leant down the strong smell of beer hit him, which likely explained the bleary, red-rimmed eyes.

"Oh, are we in a bad mood? Not getting any, is that it?"

"What do you want," he repeated.

"Get in."

"Why would I get into a car with you?"

"Because you're curious."

“Am I?”

“Yep. About why I haven’t been rattling your chain these days. About why I’ve been taking it easy on you at practice. About a lot of things I’ll bet.”

“You’ve been taking it easy on me?”

“What? You thought you suddenly got better?”

In the six months since the fight he had in fact noticed a gradual change. Billy seemed to have gone from open antagonism to what he assumed was tolerance. At times he was even friendly; the weird sensation of Billy’s hand on his shoulder had taken him by surprise the first time. He didn’t care why things were different because he had enough going on in his life and Billy was one less thing to worry about. There were still flare-ups between them, usually on the court where Billy remained aggressive and determined to win, but those had become oddly rare. And if he were being honest with himself there was something about Billy, something vaguely unsettling, unnameable, that he liked. **That** he was definitely curious about.

“Harrington. You still with me?”

“Yeah.”

“So get in.”

“I don’t think so.”

As he walked away Billy called after him.

“Harrington! Get in the car. Please.”

The tone of his voice stopped him as much as the words themselves. This wasn’t the confident, arrogant Billy he was used to. Billy never said please; he just assumed people would do what he asked.

“OK, but I’m tired and I’m hungry and my head aches so I’m not going to put up with any of your bullshit.”

“No bullshit. Promise.” He crossed his heart as if to confirm it.

That childish gesture coming from Billy almost made Steve laugh out loud. He climbed into the passenger seat beside him. The car was clean, which he hadn't expected, but it still smelled of stale smoke and old sweat, as if he spent a lot of time in it.

Billy reached over into the back and pulled out a can of beer.

"Want one?" He popped it open and held it out.

"A bit early for me."

Billy shrugged. "Have it your way." He took a long drink, draining half the can, and let out a loud burp when he finished. "You sure?" He waved it at him.

He shook his head. "OK, not to sound like a broken record, but what do you want, Hargrove?"

"You could start by calling me Billy."

Steve just looked at him blankly, then he realised. He wasn't sure if he had ever called him anything but Hargrove to his face. It was something they both did, part of their unspoken "keep your distance, buddy" arrangement.

"Fine. What do you want, Billy?"

Billy took another swig of his beer.

"And I can call you ...?"

"Oh for Christ's sake. Steve. You can call me Steve. Happy?"

"You made my day." He drained his can and reached for another. "Sure you don't want one? Just two left."

Steve rubbed his forehead in frustration.

"Fine. Maybe then we can get on with it."

"Atta boy. Here."

Steve watched Billy toy with his newly opened can. "How many of

these have you had?”

“Well, let’s see. I started out with eight.” He held up one hand, fingers extended, then realised that wasn’t enough so he stuck the can between his legs and held up three on his other hand. “You’ve got one. I’ve got one.” He lowered the fingers as he counted. So that’s ...” He looked at the remaining fingers. “Six since three o’clock. I’m going for a personal best.”

“Oh, and some of this.” The beer between his legs tipped precariously as he retrieved a bottle of Jack Daniels from the back floor.

“You’re drunk.”

“Nah. Feeling just good ... just feeling good.” He smiled crookedly. “Maybe a little.”

Now isn’t this just great. To top off my day I’m in a car with a shitfaced Billy.

Out of nowhere the conversation switched.

“Tell me, Harr ... Steve, people like you, right? Why’s that?”

“Maybe because I’m not a dick all the time.”

“Ha!’ Billy snorted. “Nope, that can’t be it.” He reached over and slapped Steve’s leg, leaving his hand resting on his knee. “Even I like you and I don’t like anyone.”

“You ... like me?” Steve was determined to ignore the hand rather than risk the possibility of setting Billy off. “Your fists and my face tell me you have an odd way of showing it.”

Billy tilted back his head and began to sing loudly and slightly off key, “You always hurt the one ...” Then he suddenly stopped and looked down at his beer.

“What the fuck?”

“Just an old thing my mom used to sing.”

"I know what it is, Billy. I even know the words. Are you saying ...? What the fuck?" he repeated.

Billy sat bolt upright.

"No. I'm not saying anything." He looked quickly at Steve. "It's just a song," he mumbled weakly as if trying to convince them both. Suddenly he reached across him to fumble with the door handle, forgetting about the beer between his legs.

"This was a shit idea. Get out!"

Steve pushed his arm away and grabbed the can of beer just as it was about to spill all over him. He tossed both cans out the window.

"You wanted me here."

"Yeah, well I've changed my mind. Now I want to be alone somewhere else. GET OUT!"

Steve roughly pushed him away again. "No."

"Fine. Have it your way." He reached down to start the car, but Steve beat him to it and pulled the keys.

"Give me those back!"

"You're not driving anywhere like this."

"Why do you care?"

"I care about the people you might kill."

Oh.

"I'll drive you home. Switch places."

"I don't want to go home."

"Well, I'm not spending my night driving around aimlessly. Where do you want to go?"

"California."

“And that’s not happening either. I’m taking you home.”

Billy grabbed his arm before he could open the door.

“No. I’m in enough trouble as it. Coming in late will be bad - half an hour, all night, won’t matter - but I can’t go home like this.”

Steve was shocked by the genuine fear in his voice. *What on earth could make him that afraid?*

“Just drive me somewhere and let me sleep it off. Take the damn keys if you’re worried. Just don’t forget to come back.”

Steve was tempted to do just that. Billy wasn’t his problem.

“OK, get over here.”

Billy struggled out and used the car to help himself around to the passenger side; it wasn’t until he stood that he realised how drunk he really was. Steve pushed him in and slammed the door.

“Where we going?” he asked as Steve started to drive.

“My place.”

“That’s nice.”

“Jesus, you really are out of it now. Maybe I’ll just drop you off a cliff.”

Billy’s head was lolled back and his eyes were starting to glaze.

“Yeah, that sounds good too.”

“Stay awake! I’m not going to carry you into the house.”

Once there he helped him stumble up the stairs and into the living room where he dropped him on the sofa, sticking one of the throw cushions under his head. He covered him with the ugly afghan his mother had draped over the back and got a bucket just in case.

“Use this because I’ll be damned if I’m cleaning up after you.”

“Got it. Thanks,” he mumbled drunkenly. “Did I tell you I like you?”

“Oh yeah.” *You did a lot more than that, Billy boy. I wonder if you’ll remember.*

He left him and went into the kitchen. Emptying some of the stew his mother had left him into a pot he put it on the burner and stood stirring it.

What the hell am I getting into? It wasn’t like he didn’t know what Billy was on about and, although he usually stuck to girls, it also wasn’t like he hadn’t fooled around with another guy, but this was Billy Hargrove - violent, unpredictable, mean-spirited Billy Hargrove; the last person in the world he would have expected this from. And he somehow felt like it wasn’t going to be, “Hey, how about a quick hand job behind the shed.”

He quickly tested the stew then went back to stirring.

Billy was attractive in an uninhibited, this is what you get way. He deliberately flaunted his body; pouring himself into jeans that clung everywhere and leaving his shirt open almost to the navel. It was trashy, but it was also attention-grabbing. He knew it and he walked like he knew it. Without his clothes he was just as attractive, maybe more, but differently and Steve had to admit now that he thought about it that it was a shame to hide that ass in those jeans.

When it was hot enough, he poured the stew into a bowl, grabbed a couple of slices of bread so he could dip them in it and sat down in a chair facing the sofa. Billy was fast asleep on his back, one arm flung over his eyes, the other tucking the afghan between his legs.

As he ate he realised that he had no idea what would happen next, but he suspected that things were going to get complicated and likely messy and that he should probably run as fast as he could in the other direction. He also knew that he wasn’t going to do that because, as Billy had said, he had been curious, but now he was curious where it would all lead.

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